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- Opinion
- Sports
- Our Town
- Advertising
- Classifieds
- Online Extras
- Services
- Sections and Directories

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One Voice trip a smart investment for SJC

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Written by The Editorial Board
Tuesday, 17 March 2009

Frivolous? No way. Tracy — and our entire county — needs to send representatives on this trip.

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A crowd of sign-waving residents showed up Tuesday night in Lathrop to complain about how much money that city will spend to send the mayor and city manager to Washington, D.C., next month with San Joaquin County's One Voice delegation.

Their protest is that this annual One Voice trip is an expensive and unnecessary hobnobbing junket with lawmakers on Capitol Hill. They said it's wrong for Lathrop to spend taxpayer money right after the city raised water and sewer rates.

But we've followed these trips for the past nine years and can easily justify the grassroots lobbying effort on behalf of Tracy, Lathrop, Manteca, Ripon, Lodi, Stockton and Escalon. The benefits far outweigh the costs, as One Voice has proven to be an effective tool for bending the ear of decision-makers.

In fact, since 2000, the federal government has doled out more than \$60 million for transportation projects in our county — money that might not have come even close to finding its way here without the One Voice trips planned by the San Joaquin Council of Governments.

And money like this brings jobs, something that we can't afford to pass up — especially with a national recession and unemployment soaring above 15 percent in San Joaquin County.

This year, the One Voice group has 24 requests, including money to expand rail service over the Altamont Pass and to help pay for two Tracy-specific transportation projects — on MacArthur Drive and at Interstate 205 and Lammers Road.

Mayor Brent Ives and City Manager Leon Churchill will join at least 30 others from the county to travel to D.C. in April and meet with representatives in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives and others within the federal government.

We wish them well — and hope they bring home more of the bacon.

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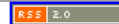
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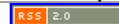


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